

Paying tribute to Charles County's natural landscape and wildlife, officials have launched a new branding campaign they hope will draw businesses and tourists to the county.

Carrying the tagline "Where Eagles Fly," the campaign celebrates the county's North American bald eagle population, one of the nation's densest. The eagle often is considered a symbol of strength, patriotism and freedom, and county officials hope the eagle brand will resonate with visitors and entrepreneurs alike.

"The brand that they felt jumped out at them was the eagle," Joanne Roland, the county's tourism director, said of officials' reaction. "They looked at it and they said this really makes sense for Charles County."

The county has long hosted bald eagles its western areas, including Nanjemoy, Marbury and Indian Head. Eagles nest in the loblolly pines near the Potomac River.

"We've got a pretty good landscape, so it's not unusual to see the eagles around the county," said John Reardon, the county's director of economic development. "It's something that people can relate to since it's part of the heritage here."

The county hired Souza, an Annapolis-based marketing agency, to develop the campaign. The branding will occur gradually as county offices and departments adopt new logos and graphics that feature the eagle and tagline.

St. Mary's County and others involved in the redevelopment of Lexington Manor -- the "Flattops" neighborhood in Lexington Park -- will preserve two of the homes that originally were built as base housing for the Patuxent River Naval Air Station.

All the others are being demolished to make way for open space and parkland.

Over the past five years, the county has moved to clear the neighborhood, where many of the

mostly duplex housing structures had fallen into disrepair. In addition, Lexington Manor encroached on the airspace used by the Navy so officials sought to eliminate any potential future conflict.

The two homes being preserved will be refurbished, and signs will be placed near them explaining the historical significance to St. Mary's County and the Naval Air Station. Funds for the signs are being donated by Navmar Applied Sciences Corp., a firm based in Chester, Pa., that provides support services at the base in acoustics, avionics, air vehicles, sensors, system integration and prototyping.

Anyone who lived in Lexington Park's first development in its early days and who would like to lend historic photographs for the signing and preservation effort should contact Teresa Wilson, historic preservation planner, Department of Land Use and Growth Management, at 301-475-4200, Ext. 1549.

Completion of the dredging of St. Jerome Creek in St. Mary's County by the Army Corps of Engineers drew praise last week from Rep. Steny H. Hoyer (D-Md.) and Sen. Paul S. Sarbanes (D-Md.), both of whom supported federal funding for the project.

"This is a great day for recreational boaters, watermen, charter boat operators and others who use Southern Maryland's waterways," Hoyer said in a statement. "The completed dredging will enable them to more easily exit and enter St. Jerome Creek during periods of low tide and benefit the many residents near it who depend on access to the Chesapeake Bay for income and recreation."

It had been 14 years since the creek was last dredged, and it had silted in to the point that large boats could not get in or out during low tide without scraping the bottom, Hoyer noted.

"Clearly this has had a significant impact on those whose livelihoods depend on the water," he said.

St. Jerome Creek provides the only safe harbor between Point Lookout and the Patuxent River

for boats on the Chesapeake Bay seeking shelter from rapidly approaching storms.

The House and Senate agreed last year to provide \$850,000 to dredge 4,900 feet of the creek and \$200,000 to study the feasibility of constructing up to two jetties. The construction of jetties would free critical pathways and reduce the frequency of dredging.

The American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics designated the Patuxent River Naval Air Station as a historic aerospace site in a ceremony Monday.

Commissioned in 1943, the air station is the only Navy installation dedicated to research, development, testing and evaluation of naval aircraft.

The Naval Air Test Center was established at Pax River in 1945, and the U.S. Navy Test Pilot School followed in 1958. During the early years of the Cold War, the test center focused on testing aircraft and supporting the Naval Air Transport Service. Today, the air station is home to the Naval Air Systems Command, the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division, the Test Pilot School and nearly 50 other commands.

On Monday, Capt. Zachary Henry, the base commander, and Tom Milnes, the institute's Region I director, unveiled a plaque commemorating the historical significance of the site to the aerospace profession and the public.

Amateur and professional photographers could win a share of more than \$1,000 in prizes in the 2006 Maryland Natural Resource Photo Contest.

The competition, which runs through Sept. 8, is sponsored by the state Department of Natural Resources, Ritz Camera Centers and Boater's World Marine Centers. Winning entries will be featured in the winter issue of the Maryland Natural Resource magazine and the 2007 DNR calendar.

Official rules and contest entry forms are available at the sponsors' locations and at Maryland state parks. They also can be found on the DNR Web site, www.dnr.maryland.gov/photocontest.